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ABSTRACT

There are essentially two ways in which individuals might perceive the world around them and two ways in which they might behave in that world. The world is perceived as being either basically friendly or basically hostile. If one experiences the world as friendly then one is likely to expect that what is needed will be available. If one believes that the world is basically unsupportive, then experience of adverse conditions seems normal. One's position in the world affects the kind of action one will take. If active, one will feel responsible for outcomes. As a passive individual, one accepts what life provides or withholds. The language one uses tends to communicate world view and position. When counselors understand, using this model, how views and positions differ or are similar, counselors may find themselves trying to persuade clients to their own perspective. There may be signs that counselors and clients are not seeing things the same way when there is client resistance to the counseling effort. Counselors can use the model as an assessment device to assist in self-evaluation. It can also be used to monitor causes of resistance and lack of compliance. Further, it can lead to a greater degree of empathy on the part of the counselor by providing another level of client understanding. (ABL)

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THE WORLD VIEW OF COUNSELOR AND CLIENT:
HOW IT AFFECTS EFFECTIVE INTERACTION

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WORLD VIEW OF THE COUNSELOR AND CLIENT:
HOW IT AFFECTS EFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS

When you get up in the morning, how do you prepare yourself for the day? As you make your plans you organize your approach to your activities according to the way you perceive your environment and the role you take in dealing with that world. As you reflect on this question, consider whether or not your strategy is any different today than it was ten years ago or even longer. In this discussion I suggest that there are essentially only two ways you might perceive the world you live in and two ways in which you behave in that world.

Either your world is basically friendly or hostile. If you experience the world as friendly you are likely to expect that what you need is available to you. The cosmos will provide. In spite of an occasional difficult situation, when all is resolved and back to normal, your world supports you. On those stressful occasions when you feel beleaguered, you acknowledge that this is not the usual state of affairs and it will pass.

Should you believe that the world is basically unsupportive, your experience of adverse conditions seems normal. When things are going well with little stress or discomfort, you expect that this condition is short-lived and when things return to normal for you, the elements of your world will require struggle or endurance.

Your position in the world affects the kind of action you will take. If active, you will feel responsible for outcomes. Your choice will feel pro-active and assertive. You experience a sense of control/responsibility for your choices and behavior. Things do not happen by themselves. You cooperate in how you live life. Although there are occurrences over which you have no direct control, your response is more critical than the situation. How you react is under your control.

As a passive individual, on the other hand, you accept what life provides or withholds, You believe that your responsibility is to cope with situations as they occur. Although you have personal responsibility for your response, what life presents dictates how you live it.

Many people will report that their position most accurately reflects reality. They can document life experiences that sustain their view of reality. On occasion, highly stressful life events can cause individuals to question their reality discernment. There is a sense of comfort and fit when one can once again acknowledge that "all is right" with the world.

The language one uses tends to broadcast or communicate world view and position. Counselors might examine their own language in light of this model. What verbs and descriptors are used when discussing issues and situations? How is the future described to clients? For instance, are clients urged to take responsibility for their future or just for their actions? Future may indicate a sense of trust in the universe that may not

exist in the client. Is the world depicted as a place to do battle or rather as a position from which one copes? This examination is suggested not to encourage any change in language but rather to be aware of word choices that reflect a view and a position.

In addition to exploring counselor language, client word choice is also predictive of view and position. When counselors understand, using this model, how views and positions differ or are similar, communication can become more effective. Without this examination, counselors may find themselves trying to persuade clients to their own perspective. It is important to recognize that there is no correct position. There are only positions. Just as in Myers-Briggs typology the theory stipulates that differences are not only acceptable but also complementary, this model can be construed in a similar way. The counselor may be exerting energy with the client by attempting to change a client's perspective to one that is more like that of the counselor. This may be occurring at an unconscious level. Therefore, using the model as a way to identify counselor orientation as well as that of the client can work to prevent any misunderstanding or attempts at persuasion.

There may be signs that counselors and clients are not seeing things the same way when there is client resistance to the counseling effort. When confronted with a viewpoint that is different, clients may exert some effort in defending their view. Using this model during times of non-compliance and resistance

may provide clues to the problem. This model is not intended as a solution to all resistance problems. The intent is to use it as a diagnostic tool in evaluating the nature of resistance. If the client is argumentative or defensive, reflection on language by the counselor may be beneficial.

Counselors can also use the model as a counseling device. Using it as an assessment tool at the outset may help to establish some ground rules for interaction. It will help both parties understand where each is grounded and provide a vehicle for better clarity and understanding. It can, at the least, prevent resistance based on differences of position and view.

It is not difficult to apply this model in the counseling setting. Begin by having clients provide descriptions of themselves and their world. Note the verbs and adjective used and apply them against the model. As a further investigation, ask clients to describe goals and strategies for attaining them. Are goals seen as challenges to be met or problems to be solved? Do clients describe themselves as active and proactive or passive and reactive? It will be important to analyze body language as well as verbal communication. Posture, erect or laid back, may provide clues to position.

Some examples of statements may clarify the verbal clues for identification:

WORLD VIEW

HOSTILE/ACTIVE

I try. My options are limited because of a variety of factors. I don't expect much change but I will try. I struggle but I make choices. Each day is a battlefield. There are limitations but I assert myself.

HOSTILE/PASSIVE

I am destined. I have no or very little control. I play the hand I was dealt. I get by the best I can. Nothing will ever change. I am resigned. There are limitations but I accept.

FRIENDLY/ACTIVE

I direct myself. I have the power to make decisions. I shape the direction of my life. I usually make good decisions. I have options and I choose.

FRIENDLY/PASSIVE

I accept. My life is pre-determined. I respond to the doors that open to me. Fate will direct me. I trust in providence. I am dutiful. There are limitations but I trust I will be protected.

Involving clients in the assessment may be beneficial. It will further their own self understanding. Part of the learning in this model is to understand that there are differences and no one owns the truth. That differences exist is a critical

learning. Understanding that one does not have to persuade others to a perspective can be liberating as well as conducive to better communication and increased empathy. This knowledge can be used by the client, not only in the counseling session but also in other personal and professional situations.

Understanding and using this model may be helpful to clients who are experiencing difficulties with superiors or subordinates at work. Examining their position and determining the position of others may be enlightening. Accepting another's position and view as valid removes an individual's misplaced sense of responsibility for convincing another that it is better to be active or passive or view the world as friendly or hostile.

There is another issue that bears consideration with this model. Clients under stress may state that they have a particular view but further assert that they wish that things were otherwise. Using the model, client and counselor can determine if adverse circumstances are at work. Client who state that they wish to be otherwise, probably are. In other words, they are feeling pressured or betrayed and theirs is a position of defense rather than comfort. Deeper discussion around the stress may reveal that the client really believes otherwise but life has pushed the client into an attitude that is not consistent with a long held viewpoint. It is not recommended that the counselor urge the client to change but rather to reflect on the validity of the current position as a life long attitude. This

deliberation in itself can be a counseling intervention that will lead to insight.

In summary, the model can be used as an assessment tool in a counseling setting to assist in self evaluation. It can also be utilized to monitor causes of resistance and lack of compliance. Further, it can lead to a greater degree of empathy on the part of the counselor by providing another level of client understanding.